



Connecting Older Adults with Community-based Resources and Options  
The Area Agency on Aging of Suburban Cook County, since 1974

## **Fiscal Years 2022-2024 Area Plan on Aging**

### **Fiscal Year 2022 Public Information Document**

At **AgeOptions**, we believe that...

**Quality of life** is essential to everyone

**Communities that care** make a difference

**Knowledge** is powerful

Good choices depend on **reliable resources**

That's why we connect aging with options for living well.



## 1. Fiscal Year 2022 Public Information Document

AgeOptions, the Area Agency on Aging for suburban Cook County, is conducting two virtual Public Hearings on the suburban Cook County Area Plan on Aging for Fiscal Year 2022. The public is welcome and encouraged to discuss and comment on the Plan.

If you need special assistance, a translator, sign language, or other accommodations, please contact Sarah Barney at (708) 383-0258 at least two days prior to the hearing. If you are unable to attend an event or have input, please submit your comments to Sarah.Barney@ageoptions.org by June 1, 2021. Below are the details of how to access our hearing by phone or by Zoom.

Date	Time	Website or phone option
<b>Wednesday May 26, 2021</b>	1:00 pm -2:30 pm	To attend this session please register here: <a href="https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUvdu-srz8qEtag_leVGAZfa-TxTrTyosiT">https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUvdu-srz8qEtag_leVGAZfa-TxTrTyosiT</a>
<b>Thursday, May 27, 2021</b>	10:30 am – 12:00 pm	To attend this session please register here: <a href="https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMocu-oqD4sHteXtLfC4WTKm81YGDRhPZiu">https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMocu-oqD4sHteXtLfC4WTKm81YGDRhPZiu</a>

*\*If unable to the click hyperlinks above, please copy and paste into your browser*

This Public Information Document summarizes the first year of the three-year AgeOptions Area Plan for Fiscal Years 2022-2024. This Public Information Document is for the reader to use as a tool to stimulate comments and questions at the Public Hearings.

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## **Purpose of the Public Information Document and the Area Plan Public Hearings**

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The AgeOptions’ Area Plan on Aging is a planning, management and grant award document. It encompasses service delivery plans and priority issues over a three-year period from October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2024.<sup>1</sup>

This Public Information Document provides an official summary of the proposed Area Plan on Aging for Fiscal Years 2022-2024. The purpose of this Public Information Document is to present an outline of our plan to distribute federal and state funding to deliver services to older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers in suburban Cook County. AgeOptions reissues the Public Information Document in the spring of each year to provide detailed information for the upcoming year.

The purpose of the Area Plan Public Hearings is to provide an open forum for the public to make recommendations and comments on this Public Information Document. AgeOptions is interested in receiving feedback about our plan, especially from the people we serve. Comments or questions received will be reviewed by AgeOptions Advisory Council and Board who will consider changes to the Area Plan. AgeOptions prepares summaries of public hearing testimonies from all locations and identifies any actions. A full report on the above is available upon request and when available.

## **AgeOptions The Area Agency on Aging of Suburban Cook County**

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### **Who We Are**

AgeOptions is a not-for-profit organization committed to improving the quality of life and maintaining the dignity of older adults and those who care about them. Our purpose is to connect older adults, aged 60 and over, with resources and options for care so that they have a range of choices and the opportunity to live their lives to the fullest.

AgeOptions is nationally recognized for its innovative programming, strong community partnerships, excellent service provision, and powerful advocacy.

**AgeOptions Strategic Plan** includes the following vision, mission, values and diversity statement.

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<sup>1</sup> Fiscal Year 2022 (October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022), FY 2023 (October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023), FY 2024 (October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024)

**AgeOptions Vision:** *People **thriving** as they age*

**AgeOptions Mission:** *AgeOptions innovates, partners, and advocates to improve systems and services in order to strengthen communities so people thrive as they age.*

**AgeOptions Values:**

- **Commitment:** *AgeOptions is committed to the people and communities we serve, our partners and staff. We show it through our fortitude, capacity, dedication, passion, and perseverance.*
- **Integrity:** *AgeOptions strives to align its principles, words and actions. We act with integrity and honesty in the work that we do, through interactions, with clients, partners and funders, and in the decisions that we make. We are accountable to one another and to those whom we serve.*
- **Connectedness:** *AgeOptions is active and engaged with our communities. We believe that we can best serve our mission by listening, partnering and convening.*

**AgeOptions Diversity Statement:** *The diversity of our organization and communities is a rich asset that strengthens our mission and guides our decisions and direction.*

AgeOptions has served older adults and their families throughout suburban Cook County since 1974 as part of a nationwide service network of Area Agencies on Aging. This nationwide network includes the Administration for Community Living<sup>2</sup> at the federal level, the Illinois Department on Aging which is the State Office on Aging at the state level, 620 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) nationwide at the regional level, and local community service providers, all working together to serve older adults.

AgeOptions is governed by a Board of Directors, whose responsibilities include setting direction, establishing policies, and allocating resources. Our Advisory Council is comprised of older adults and other professionals interested in aging from across suburban Cook County. The role of the Advisory Council is to advise AgeOptions on the development and implementation of the Area Plan and to serve as an advocate for older persons. A list of our Board of Directors and Advisory Council members can be found towards the end of this document.

## **Who We Serve**

AgeOptions is designated under the federal Older Americans Act and the Illinois Act on Aging as the Area Agency on Aging for the suburban Cook County Planning and

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<sup>2</sup> The Administration for Community Living is a part of the federal Department of Health and Human Services

Service Area (PSA), #13. AgeOptions is one of the 13 Area Agencies on Aging in Illinois. This region is home to more than 2.5 million people.

The older adult population in suburban Cook County is rapidly growing and becoming increasingly diverse. Based on the American Community Survey 2015-2019, there are 568,743 older adults and 275,830 caregivers<sup>2i</sup> in 130 communities. Based on Census estimates, there are 583,282 older adults in suburban Cook County (as cited by the Illinois Department on Aging). Services are available to all people over the age of sixty and family caregivers of all ages but are targeted to low income, minority, and limited English-Speaking individuals. Last year, AgeOptions and our community partners made a difference in the lives of 204,399 individuals. A map of our service area is on page 49.

## **What We Do**

- **Planning:** AgeOptions assesses the needs of older adults and those who care for them, seeks input from the public in establishing service priorities, tests new service models and develops new programs. AgeOptions helps people access services, stay independent in their homes, provide caregiver support, maintain their rights, age well, have proper nutrition and access to services in their community.
- **Coordination:** AgeOptions coordinates services in working with community partners, many of which receive Older Americans Act grants and contracts from AgeOptions. We receive guidance from the community by listening to our Advisory Council, and our community partners in regularly scheduled meetings designed to assure effective services including Adult Protective Services, Caregiver, Aging and Disability Resource Network, Transportation, Nutrition, and ethnic agency partners. While our programs are concentrated in suburban Cook County, AgeOptions also has direct responsibility for several programs that serve metropolitan Chicago and the entire state of Illinois.
- **Advocacy:** AgeOptions advocates in many ways for older adults, those who care for them, and adults with disabilities. We advocate for benefit programs, services and funding at the federal and state levels. We inform legislators of the impact of legislation on older persons and our service network. We lead an Advocacy Task Force for people interested in aging issues.
- **Program Development:** AgeOptions creates and sustains a variety of innovative programs that respond to the rich diversity of our communities such as work with libraries, memory cafes and other programs listed in the Appendix.
- **Distribute Funds:** Using proven methods of research and planning, AgeOptions is entrusted with distributing funds to a network of local community service providers and agencies across the state who participate in our broader programming. We administer federal, state, and private funds. AgeOptions support services through grants and contracts to more than 70 community-based organizations such as councils on aging, townships and senior centers.

## Suburban Cook County Demographics

### Understanding the Growth in the 60+ Population

Based on the American Community Survey 2015-2019, there are 568,743 **older adults** in Suburban Cook County.

#### Suburban Cook Facts! Did you Know?

- Older adults make up **22.9%** of total suburban Cook County population
- **Sixteen** other states have smaller older adult populations than suburban Cook County
- **40.6%** of suburban Cook older adults are householders that live alone.
- Today, **10%** of older adults in suburban Cook County are over the age of 85
- **Over 45,000** older adults in suburban Cook County live below the federal poverty level. In 2021, the federal poverty level was \$12,880 annually for a single person and \$17,420 for a family of two.
- More than **14.8%** of older adults speak English less than very well.

The older adult population has increased. Now more than **1 in 5** individuals in suburban Cook County are **older adults**.



Today, nearly **1 in 3** older adults in suburban Cook County are racially or ethnically **diverse**.

#### Suburban Cook is Becoming More Diverse!

According to the most recent American Community Survey Data (2015-2019), **29.6%** of the 60+ population in suburban Cook identifies as a racial or ethnic minority:

- **14%** are Black or African American
- **7.1%** are Asian
- **8%** are Hispanic or Latino

# Area Plan Development

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## Planning Process

To develop the Area Plan on Aging, AgeOptions engages in a variety of activities to assess the needs of older adults. This includes active older adults, adults which includes older adults with disabilities, caregivers of older adults, and older adult grandparents raising children. The steps and activities of AgeOptions' FY2022 planning process are outlined below.

### Step 1: Assess Needs of the Target Population in suburban Cook County

- Consult studies, reports, relevant regulations and guidelines including (National, State, Regional and local community)
- Consult local experts and groups on needs and service gaps including:
  - Adult Protective Services Supervisors
  - AgeOptions Advisory Council
  - AgeOptions Advocacy Task Force
  - AgeOptions Advisery partners
  - AgeOptions Caregiver Specialists agencies
  - AgeOptions Fatality Review Teams
  - AgeOptions Funded Partners
  - AgeOptions Information and Assistance Team
  - AgeOptions Nutrition Partners
  - Alzheimer's Association Greater Illinois Chapter
  - Caring Together Living Better Partners
  - Chicago Task Force on LGBT Aging
  - Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
  - Coalition for Limited English-Speaking Elderly (CLESE)
  - Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) of Northeastern Illinois
  - Discharge Planners
  - Health Care and Managed Care Organizations
  - Illinois Financial Abuse Specialty Teams
  - Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging (I4A)
  - Local, state and federal legislators at the annual Legislative Breakfasts
  - Progress Center for Independent Living
  - Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) partners
- Gather community and participant input including:
  - Information and Assistance calls
  - Legislative Breakfasts (Held virtually in 2021)
  - Virtual visits to funded partners
- Examine Updated Census Data (American Community Survey 2015-19)
- Examination of the latest research and reports from academic journals and local, state and national organizations and initiatives to identify key factors influencing current conditions and determine programmatic considerations
- Review program data

- Examine demographic, unit and client data by service (NAPIS)
- Review Information and Assistance call trends
- Determine gaps in targeting to those in greatest social and economic need by comparing NAPIS data demographics of clients served to Census data
- Review Significant Development reports from funded partners

Step 2: Evaluate the Existing Service System

- Ongoing processes of conducting unit cost analysis of services and budget rates.
- Routine summaries of collected information to identify strengths and service gaps.

Step 3: Determine Availability of Resources and Alternative Approaches Available to Meet Needs

- Weigh needs versus potential resources and draft a plan
- Get input on draft plan from stakeholders

Step 4: Establish Priorities

- Summarize needs and suggested approach
- Determine priorities with Advisory Council and Board input

Step 5: Plan Modification and Refinement

- Complete Area Plan on Aging Public Information Document
- Conduct regional Public Hearings
  - Modify the plan as necessary based on public input

**Summary of Fiscal Year 2022 Needs Assessment**

AgeOptions uses the results of our needs assessment and planning processes to set funding priorities and refine standards for our Request for Proposals. We will continue to use the results of our needs assessments in the development of training and resources for the network, advocacy strategies, increased collaboration and coordination, and special initiatives.

It should be noted that 2020 and 2021 presented AgeOptions and our aging network of providers with new and unique challenges. Traditional means of presenting programs which were largely face-to-face have gone to virtual formats. Formalized needs assessments and in just our staff daily conversations with our communities of older adults indicate an increased risk of social isolation and the need to modify the way services are traditionally delivered. Virtual formats require the use of technology. What we are learning is that service delivery systems may have changed forever.

As such, during our planning process for Fiscal Year 2022, AgeOptions anticipates the need to continue to learn and to adapt.

A number of formal surveys and evaluation processes took place in addition to the ongoing and routine ways of collecting data and learning from our constituents. Below are some of the processes that occurred or are currently in-place:

- Beginning in 2019 running through 2021, AgeOptions attempted to engage participants in the research component of our 2018 Administration for Community Living initiative testing the value and benefit of a Closed-Loop Referral Platform. While the number of participants agreeing to the research has been limited, data analysis indicates that persons are at-risk of food insecurity and that this insecurity extends beyond the older adult to his/her immediate family.
- In the late spring of 2020, AgeOptions conducted a survey of persons participating in our Top Box food box delivery program which was implemented in large measure as a result of the temporary closure of congregate dining sites due to the pandemic. The survey indicated a high level of satisfaction with the program and that participants may be finding the program helpful in subsidizing their finances and nutritional needs of the older adult's extended family. The survey also indicated that there is a gap in services between those that are unable to shop or go to a food pantry, but have the ability and desire to cook. Analysis indicates that this gap is present regardless of the stay-at-home requirements under the pandemic.
- In early 2021, AgeOptions conducted a survey of former chore participants in the south suburbs of Cook County. The results indicated that there appears to be a continued need for a brief in-home cleaning service and/or some type of handy-person service to perform home repairs.
- In 2021, AgeOptions is engaged in a number of on-going program evaluations. These include collecting data to assess the effects of social isolation by our partnering agencies and us by administering the UCLA Loneliness Scale.
- In 2021, AgeOptions is engaged by working with partnering entities on identifying food preferences amongst an array of different ethnic groups. When these surveys are complete and analyzed, it is anticipated that they will influence meal plans for a 2020 Administration for Community Living grant known as Title III C 1.5 representing a model to address the service gaps brought to the forefront in the 2020 survey of our Top Box participants and potentially the menus for home delivered meal and congregate programs by becoming more culturally sensitive.

A number of issues were presented to us from what was learned from above and from our daily interactions with constituents and our family of providers. These truly affect the ability to help as many older persons as possible with the available funding. Examples of these challenges follow:

### **Difficulty in Accessing or Maintaining Medicaid Benefits**

Slow or Inaccurate Bureaucratic Systems: Consumers are losing or experiencing a lapse in their benefits, unable to get through to the Department of Human Services (DHS) offices, and receiving confusing letters in the mail with short or no turn-around time. Callers are placed on-hold when using the toll-free hotline numbers. These processes are confusing and frustrating. The pandemic may have exacerbated this challenge as offices have been closed and our constituents are used to face-to-face resolutions of problems. Many would simply go to the local DHS office and speak to a

counselor. In addition, our constituents who live on fixed incomes are challenged at the annual reporting of income that essentially has not changed.

A number of challenges have been identified when working with Managed Care Organizations (MCO):

- Clients continue to be auto-assigned to a Managed Care Organization (MCO) but are not aware or understand this process. AgeOptions has seen most concern with persons enrolled in the MMAI program. Clients often do not understand how to contact their Care Coordinator. MCOs appear to not providing assistance with Medicaid applications and redeterminations. In addition, when looking at the number of persons as MCO insureds as compared to persons not enrolled, the percentage of MCO insured referred to home delivered meals is significantly less. This is particularly disconcerting in relationship to other data regarding food insecurity.
- Nutrition providers report communication challenges. AgeOptions grantee agencies do not know when and if a plan of care has been updated, who is the current assigned care coordinator. MCOs appear to have a high turn-over and as such, new staff do not know and understand the opportunities offered by an Area Agency on Aging and in particular how to access our nutrition programs.
- A cohort of our constituents continue to refuse public benefit programs because of a perceived stigma. This impacts older adults' access to benefits.

### **Gaps in General Accessibility of Services:**

There are various needs related to the (1) affordability of healthcare services and medications, (2) education and outreach to enhance the understanding and utilization of services to older adults, (3) inclusive practices and language assistance to be more culturally and linguistically competent, (4) funding for elder abuse programs and referral systems, and (5) collaboration between existing and non-traditional partnerships.

### **Housing Benefits and Access:**

There are insufficient and long waitlists for affordable housing for the older adult population. The moratorium on rent as a pandemic relief strategy has benefited many however it has made the availability of affordable housing worse. Apartments that in normal times would be available, are not. In addition, older adults may be living in housing that does not meet their needs, but they cannot afford to move. Evidence of this is showing-up in our assessments related to food insecurity where persons are seeking food because they are running short of money during the course of the month. Our legal assistance provider is reporting a higher-than-normal calls regarding eviction status. Additionally, AgeOptions is also observing that some communities are gentrifying and older adults are being pushed out because of the lack of affordable housing.

Accessing public housing including Section 8 and 202 buildings requires one to contact individual buildings and individual housing authorities. When wait lists do open, there is

a short window in which to apply. It would be helpful if there was a more centralized application system and for AgeOptions and our partnering ADRNs had a common provider portal to assist our constituents in finding affordable housing.

### **Challenges to Aging-in-Place and Need for Home Repair:**

Many of our constituents are experiencing financial insecurity. The lack of adequate financial resources is showing-up in food insecurity, but also one's home environments with leaky roofs, inoperable furnaces and unhealthy conditions. Constituents are requesting programs and services that include major as well as minor home repairs. This is showing-up in our calls and in our program surveys.

In addition, there are limited options for environmental modifications such as building ramps, widening doors and renovations to kitchens and bathrooms to make them more aging friendly and accessible to persons who may have physical challenges.

Related to the ability to age-in-place is securing home repair vendors who are trustworthy, reliable and honest. Constituents are seeking vendors that will not financially exploit and provide quality work.

With Older Americans Act Title III B funding, AgeOptions through grants to Catholic Charities, Kenneth Young Center and the Northwest Housing Partnership, a limited number of one-time home repairs are provided. However, as indicated in our assessment activities, more is needed.

### **Transportation:**

A problem that has likely been a concern for the past 50 years is a lack of transportation and in particular, transportation systems that go to where the older adult needs to go. While many of our communities do offer within community transportation, the more significant challenge is when one's doctor is in another jurisdiction or township. Our older adults report needing to go to a doctor in Indiana or simply in the neighboring township, just a short mile or two away. In general, there is insufficient available and affordable transportation for older adults to access services and medical appointments.

During the pandemic, discount coupons for personal transportations such as Lyft and Uber were offered. However, because of the need to social distance, fear and often challenges just to make them work, proved not to be the best of options.

The limited number of Title III B funding to our grantee partners that do offer transportation, this past year were challenged to operate due to lower capacity impacting the unit rate and need for extra cleaning, and PPE

## **Food Insecurity:**

Hunger issues for older adults are often overlooked. A number of our various surveys of constituents indicate that persons do not have enough money for food and that our older adults are seeking food, not just for themselves but for their extended families. While the minimum \$16 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit was raised in response to the pandemic, it is unknown how long these benefit levels will remain intact. As this document is being written, it appears to be a month-to-month decision by the Governor.

In response to the closure of congregate dining sites due to COVID- 19, AgeOptions instituted a boxed food delivery program from a not-for-profit vendor – TopBox. When surveyed, the level of satisfaction with this program is very high. An interesting finding is participants are finding this program as discussed previously to help with financial insecurity, and to feed more than the older adult themselves. This raises the need to explore additional funding sources and increased advocacy.

Constituents also report residing in food deserts. There is a need for more local grocers and outlets for fresh and healthful foods.

The pandemic has increased the need for nutrition assistance. Since the beginning of the pandemic Title III-C programs increased by 30% with 231,000 more meals served. However, food insecurity persists in the community. When congregate sites do reopen, it will be difficult to predict how many people will attend. Following reopening, it is expected new challenges will be identified.

## **Accessibility of Mental Health Services, Counseling and Services to Address Hoarding:**

There are limited resources for mental health support and services for the older adult population, especially for those confined to their home. During the pandemic as with all health-related services, there has been an increase use of tele-health. While for many this is positive, for persons needing counseling or suffer from a more serious mental illness, tele-health is an operational challenge.

The pandemic as mentioned throughout this Public Information Document and our plan is the effect it is having on exacerbating the risk of social isolation. A consequence is increased anxiety, depression and loneliness.

In relationship to one particular obsessive compulsive disorder is finding resources for persons who are hoarders. This is a challenge. In addition, the environment may also be infested with bed bugs. Providers willing to help with hoarding are uncomfortable or unwilling to help because of the bug infestation.

## **Homecare, Increase the Minimum Wage and Overall Funding of Programs/Services**

The cost of providing care in Cook County is more expensive due to the increase in minimum wage. While there are plans in the state budget to improve the reimbursement rate for homecare workers, more funding is needed. Even with higher pay for the direct care worker, it is still short of a living wage. The result appears to be a workforce shortage of direct care workers. The funding deficit is also true for the professional staff. Our partnering care coordination units and adult protective service agencies are experiencing a staff revolving door. Our agencies are finding that it takes a longer than normal time to hire and when staff are trained, they leave to work for a MCO. Reimbursement for activities do not match the competition which are largely the MCOs funded through Medicaid.

The pandemic has brought its own set of challenges to homecare. Older adults are fearful of bringing homecare workers into their homes. Homecare workers are reported to also be fearful of going into the homes of older adults. The pandemic appears to have impacted persons who are require workers representing their culture and/or language.

### **Access to Technology**

The 2020-21 pandemic has illuminated the need of older adults having access to various forms of technology to enhance communication and help to mitigate social isolation. AgeOptions engaged the company UNIPER Care that provides persons with a virtual senior center through their television. This has required training and expense. We have also helped to pay for smart phones and other devices to help connect our participants with virtual programming. This appears to be an issue of equity. Some of our constituents are keen users of technology, while others have no Internet connection and are still using flip phones or have none. Using CARES Act funding, AgeOptions has worked with local libraries in under-resourced communities to create library lending programs. These programs let older adults check out technology devices with internet hotspots.

Technology literacy is another challenge. Many older adults are resistance to change and try new forms of technology; educating one on how to use it is time consuming and not one system seems to be best for all persons.

### **Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA)**

Agencies are concerned that GATA continues to create expensive administrative burdens which divert limited funding to needless detailed reporting and budgeting.

### **Financial Insecurity and Risk of Scams and Fraud**

Embedded in several of the issues described in this section is an undercurrent of financial insecurity. It is showing-up in housing, food, home repair and in all of the other

Social Determinants of Health. While this is likely an issue to be addressed in AgeOptions advocacy efforts, it is important that it be mentioned here.

The pandemic may have also increased the opportunity for our older adults to be victims of fraud, scams and abuse.

## **Enhancements to our Planning Process**

AgeOptions is committed to its core services and will not make formal funding changes to our service delivery system from the previous fiscal year.

However, due to the pandemic AgeOptions seeks to work with its partners to ensure that service delivery systems are responsive to pandemic needs and are equipped to adapt to post-pandemic needs including but not limited to hybrid systems of service.

Lessons learned during the COVID pandemic will be applied to our planning processes and the manner in which services are delivered. In response to the pandemic, many services were provided to our constituents using technology and in virtual formats. AgeOptions projects that in the future, we will see a hybrid model of service delivery in which a combination of in-person and virtual platforms will be used. Not all older adults are keen users of technology, plus there is much value in face-to-face interactions when addressing loneliness and social isolation.

AgeOptions direct service programs and those offered through grants to our partners reflect the areas of need identified by our array of assessment processes and what staff, board members and advisory council members hear from interactions with our constituents. Additionally, AgeOptions is engaged with many local and national partners. The Area Plan for FY 2022 will reflect all of these information gathering streams.

- AgeOptions will continue its efforts to impact the lives of older adults feeling the effects of loneliness and social isolation. A service funded in large measure by the CARES Act using UNIPER Care, combining an easy-to-use technology with video meetings through the participant's television, offers a tool to combat social isolation, create active communities and promote a healthy lifestyle.
- AgeOptions will continue to advocate for the Elderly Simplified Application Program (ESAP) to improve the SNAP application and verification process. In addition, we will continue to advocate for changes to the Medicaid system. Require our Nutrition Program agencies to increase their coordination with Farmer's Market Coupons.
- Continue work with Aging Disability Resource Network and Medicaid Managed Care to clarify roles. AgeOptions will expand our work to educate the MCOs about the Aging network with an emphasis on nutritional and wellness programs.
- AgeOptions anticipates that congregate meal sites will continue to be hubs for information and out-posting sites for programs to increase coordination of services post-pandemic. Recognizing that our service delivery models have changed forever, we anticipate using hybrid models of virtual and face-to-face programming. In addition, we will continue to look for volunteer "champions" to educate on and encourage advocacy at a local level.

- Libraries partnered with AgeOptions serve as informational hubs and out-posting sites to increase referrals and cross collaboration within the aging network.
- AgeOptions implemented 21 memory cafes across suburban Cook County to address social isolation and increase referrals to the Aging and Disability Resource Network. Four (4) of the 15 currently active memory cafes are led by AgeOptions' Targeting Culturally and Linguistically Isolated Persons (TCLIP) agencies, and therefore address issues related to diversity and reaching limited English-Speaking older adults.
- Through AgeOptions Food Insecurity Initiative, we will address issues and advocacy related to hunger and outreach to hospitals and MCOs on home delivered meals.
- Working with our partners, AgeOptions will continue the Advocacy Task Force to advocate for a budget that protects services that are important to older adults, and other important advocacy issues.

## **Initiative Development**

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### **Statewide Initiative: Social Isolation**

The Illinois Department on Aging requires all Area Agencies on Aging in Illinois to address Social Isolation as a statewide initiative in their Area Plans for Fiscal Years 2022 - 2024. The goal is to specifically “enhance Illinois’ existing community-based service delivery system to address Social Isolation among Older Adults”. AgeOptions will continue its work in collaboration with other community-based providers to address social isolation among older adults. The goal is to reduce social isolation among older adults within Illinois and our planning and service area (PSA).

A lesson that was learned during the COVID pandemic is that all of us are vulnerable to social isolation. The requirement to stay-at-home, not see friends and family has caused a great deal of anxiety, sadness and depression. The pandemic has enabled us to appreciate what is an unfortunate common occurrence amongst the older adult population in better times.

Loneliness and social isolation are major issues for older adults and are linked with negative physical and mental health consequences. An AARP review identified a wide range of health outcomes associated with loneliness and social isolation including depression, cardiovascular disease, quality of life, general health, cognitive function and mortality.

Social isolation refers to the objective absence of contacts and interactions between a person and a social network. Thus, socially isolated older adults have poor or limited contact with others and they view this level of contact as inadequate and/or that the limited contact has had adverse personal consequences for them. The AARP Foundation has defined social isolation as the following:

*Isolation is the experience of diminished social connectedness stemming from a process whereby the impact of risk factors outweighs the impact of any existing protective factors. A person's lack of social connectedness is measured by the quality, type, frequency, and emotional satisfaction of social ties. Social isolation can impact health and quality of life, measured by an individual's physical, social, and psychological health, ability and motivation to access adequate support for themselves, and the quality of the environment and community in which they live.*

AARP documented that an estimated 14 percent of study participants were socially isolated. The AARP study also outlined that, "Socially isolated respondents were more likely to be male, to be white, to live in an urban area, and to have lower household income and wealth" (Flowers, Shaw, Arid, 2017). Other surveys have indicated that gender, education and race/ethnicity were not related to loneliness. Additionally, socially isolated older adults are more likely to experience depression, have five or more chronic illnesses, and have difficulty performing activities of daily living.

The primary risk factors associated with isolation include:

- Living alone;
- Mobility or sensory impairment;
- Major life transitions such as loss of spouse, retirement;
- Socioeconomic status (i.e. low income or limited resources);
- Being a caregiver for someone with severe impairment;
- Psychological or cognitive vulnerabilities;
- Location: rural, unsafe or inaccessible neighborhood/community;
- Small social network and/or inadequate social support; people who do not have close family nearby.
- Language (non-English speaking); and
- Membership in a vulnerable group such as racial or ethnic minority, underinsured or do not have good access to quality health care, LGBTQ, homeless, people who are substance abusers, people with a sensory impairment,

## **AgeOptions Approach to Social Isolation**

AgeOptions will continue to implement the Statewide Initiative during the next three (3) fiscal years.

- **Coordination:**
  - Support the research by NORC at the University of Chicago into the effects of the pandemic on persons at-risk of social isolation being conducted on behalf of the Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging with funding from the Retirement Research Foundation.
  - Continue to explore the issue of Social Isolation at a local level to determine who is already addressing the issue, what is already being done and how the aging network can fit, specifically what resources, relationships and expertise do we bring to the table.
  - Convene and attend meetings with other agencies involved with Social Isolation, such as the Illinois Cognitive Resource Network (ICRN) monthly calls, Memory Cafes, Library meetings.

- Explore working with the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus to convene an Age Friendly Communities subcommittee that involves relevant stakeholders from across suburban Cook County.
- **Program Development:**
  - Expand the use of UNIPER Care, a TV-based and mobile-based solution for care delivery and social engagement. AgeOptions has set a goal of engaging 500 isolated older adults as users.
  - Implemented 21 memory cafes across suburban Cook County to bring seniors with concerns about their memory and their caregivers together to socialize and learn about dementia in a destigmatized environment. AgeOptions will provide some funding in FY2022 to continue the cafes and increase the use of evidence-based programming within our memory café network.
  - Provided funds to increase senior focused programming across suburban Cook County. AgeOptions will issue a request for Letters of Intent for additional libraries in FY2022 or provide it to libraries who have already worked with us if they have new programming ideas and have met previous goals.

### **Plans for FY2022**

- Provide opportunities to increase digital literacy among older adults and utilize already existing online platforms to connect seniors, online chat rooms using conference lines and computer support groups.
- Work with transportation providers to ensure they are addressing issues of social isolation and if funding is available, consider transportation initiatives for older adults, such as potential partnerships with ride sharing companies (i.e. Uber, Lyft)
- Work with congregate sites and home delivered meal distribution points to develop and implement strategic planning innovations to address social isolation
- Expand outreach to nontraditional partners, such as funeral homes and hospice facilities, to educate on social isolation risk factors among older adults who have experienced loss.
- If the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders GRF funding is approved, require each of our funded Caregiver Resource Centers to have a staff person get trained on Savvy Caregiver and Stress Busters, two evidence-based programs that provide support for family caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease and Related Disorders.
- Expand the use of Bingocize throughout our network. Bingocize is an evidence based 10-week program that combines a bingo like game with exercise and health education. The program has been shown to increase older adults' functional fitness, health knowledge and social engagement.
- Expand the use of Mather LifeWays Telephone Topics. Older adults can call a toll-free number to listen to a wide range of discussions and programs including Wellness programs, Education programs, Discussion topics, Music reviews and live performances.
- AgeOptions will implement the "Wits Wisdom" developed by the University of Illinois Extension Program. The brain "exercise" program will be run by

- volunteers at our Congregate Meal sites and education and recreation grantees.
- Continue work with our funded ethnic partners to ensure people are not socially isolated due to language barriers.

## **Local Initiative: Diversity, Racial Equity, and Inclusion**

AgeOptions local initiative is Diversity, Racial Equity, and Inclusion. AgeOptions hopes to infuse a culture in our operation, policies, programs and processes as well as those of our grantee agencies whereby programs and services are delivered through a lens of social justice, sensitivity, awareness, and inclusion, with no racial, ethnic or unconscious bias. In doing so, all staff, participants and clients, regardless of the service, feel welcome, comfortable and empowered to grow.

There has long been a racial and ethnic divide in this country. AgeOptions, as a community-based organization, recognizes the diverse population that it serves and the need to represent and serve our communities. AgeOptions has embarked on a number of initiatives that look inward at ourselves and to our partners. In the article “Diversity Climates in Organizations” published in the journal *Leader to Leader* in January 2021, it states organizations need to improve how they practice diversity and inclusion. The article goes on to state that organizations improve not just by knowing about diversity, equity and inclusion, but by enacting the necessary policies and practices that lead to the development of positive diversity and inclusion climates.

Other sources of the literature offer an array of strategies to address bias. Suggestions include self-examination and exploration into personal bias; education; understanding disparities, particularly in health and opportunity. As such AgeOptions, is taking steps and plans to do more as we intensify efforts to address diversity, equity and inclusion. In large measure, this is clearly a work in progress and one where a more formalized plan will be developed in 2021.

### **Within AgeOptions**

- In 2021, AgeOptions, under the guidance and direction of our Board of Directors, Advisory Council and leadership has engaged the Morten Group which offers culturally informed solutions to important issues toward achieving equity at nonprofits. While the process has just begun, surveys and interviews are being conducted with AgeOptions staff and leaders. Recommendations will be made by the Morten Group and when operationalized will advance AgeOptions policies, actions and practices.
- For a number of years, AgeOptions has conducted an internal Diversity committee focused on identification and education. These in-house efforts will be intensified from what we learn from the work of the Morten Group.
- AgeOptions Grants Management and Planning managers plans to explore what our current partnering agencies are doing in relationship to diversity, equity and inclusion. An example of this exploration is a listening session planned with partnering agencies on their thoughts about LGBT+ programming and reaching this constituency.

- AgeOptions Human Resources has been trying outreach and engagement in their recruitment efforts at hiring staff reflective of our diverse communities.
- All AgeOptions staff participated in SAGE Care training which is designed to educate organizations and persons to become culturally competent in relationship to LGBT+ population.

### **Outreach, Engagement and Programming Directed to our Diverse Communities**

- AgeOptions engaged the expertise of Dr. Ruby Mendenhall of the University of Illinois at Chicago under a Department of Human Services “Healing Grant”. Under this opportunity, Town Hall meetings are planned with the African-American communities to help inform and define a three-year strategy to better serve these populations. AgeOptions has been especially challenged in identifying and engaging community-based organizations whose services address the needs of the African American community especially in our south suburbs. This is and will continue to be a priority. Additional Town Hall meetings will be in Latinx communities
- In 2020, AgeOptions was awarded an Administration on Community Living Nutrition Innovations grant named as Title III C 1.5. Its goal is to fill the gap between Title III C 1 congregate meals and Title C 2 home delivered meals by providing food that when prepared will provide 21 meals per week to persons who have the ability to cook or have a home care aide that can cook, but are challenged by obtaining groceries. The diversity, equity and inclusion feature of this project is that a design of this initiative is that our partnering agencies will represent the African American, Arab, Chinese, Hispanic, Korean and Jewish communities. This is a three-year project with planned implementation in 2022.
- AgeOptions’ Senior Medicare Patrol, Library, Memory Cafes, Take Charge and Falls Prevention among other programs are engaged in reaching diverse populations. Many of these programs are offered in Spanish for non-English speaking older adults. Because of the pandemic, these programs have gone to a virtual environment. These efforts will continue and be evaluated in terms of face-to-face and virtual formats.
- The AgeOptions Grants Management division is engaged in seeking to identify more congregate site partners representing additional ethnic groups. These efforts will continue.
- AgeOptions staff hosts monthly Thrive with Pride Cafes engaging the LGBT+ communities. Because of the pandemic, these programs have gone to a virtual environment. These efforts will continue and be evaluated in terms of live and virtual formats. In addition, staff are continuing to explore other opportunities to reach the LGBT+ older adult.

### **Local Initiative: Approach to Food Insecurity**

Food Insecurity as one of the Social Determinants of Health will continue as a local initiative and priority of AgeOptions. Social Determinants of Health are conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age that shape their health. The prevalence of food insecurity, which represents a condition, remains high amongst our constituents and as pointed-out in our surveys and research findings conducted on behalf of a

number of our programs, it is not only a problem to our older adults, but also to their extended families. Food insecurity is also exhibited in relationship to accessibility and access to healthful food sources, transportation, its effects on health outcomes and limited financial resources. AgeOptions will continue to conduct planning, service coordination, advocacy and program development activities with an eye on food insecurity. We will continue and implement new programs in our attempt to address this systemic challenge.

**Coordination:**

- Through advocacy efforts with coalitions such as the Food is Medicine Work Group, on-going conversations with the Greater Chicago Food Depository, and the Illinois Commission to End Hunger and the demonstration of specific initiatives, AgeOptions will continue to explore the issue of food insecurity at a local level. This will help us determine who is already addressing food insecurity, what is already being done and how the aging network can fit, specifically what resources, relationships and expertise do we bring to the table.
- Encourage Managed Care Organizations to further understand how food insecurity is impacting their insureds and how AgeOptions and our network of provider agencies and programs can mitigate food insecurity.

**Advocacy:**

- Advocate for the Elderly Simplified Application Project to simplify the SNAP application process.
- Continue to create an awareness campaign and lead initiatives to take action on food insecurity.
- Advocate for increased funding for all nutrition programs on the state and federal levels including the inclusion in the next reauthorization by Congress of the Older Americans Act of an additional category of Title III C funding to include meal boxes as we will be demonstrating over the next 2 to 3 years under AgeOptions' 2020 Administration for Community Living Nutrition grant.

**Program Development:**

- Modify and integrate the ACL Nutrition Innovations Closed-Loop resource and referral platform into the routine operations of AgeOptions.
- Advance the ACL Nutrition Innovations Title III C 1.5 initiative that is in 2021 is in the development phase to implementation in 2022 and transition to community-based providers in 2023.
- Continue to provide educational materials on how to cook healthful, low- cost meals. Educated on how to read labels, address sodium concerns, and address nutrition specific health conditions. Materials to be distributed at all nutrition program venues and made available for use by our library partners and memory cafes.
- Plans for FY2022 to continue to continue to improve access to income supports such as LIHEAP, Transportation, affordable housing, and Medicaid and Medicaid Savings Programs, in order that older adults no longer have to face the decision to pay another bill rather than buy food.

- Explore the possibility of getting double coupons for Senior Farmers Market and continue Farmers Market outreach.
- Work with congregate nutrition sites to explore the implementation of a volunteer carpooling system to reduce transportation-related barriers to attending sites. Volunteers who drive others to the congregate meal sites could have the incentive of having the suggested donation waived.
- Encourage attendance at congregate meal sites by distributing “coupons” to one’s local meal site at other senior programming.

#### **Outreach:**

- Define and operationalize the participant identification and eligibility criteria for our ACL Title III C 1.5 initiative
- Increase congregate meal site outreach by sharing information with dialysis centers, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, MCO’s and other healthcare providers.
- Outreach and build partnerships with low-income senior housing, food banks and pantries, Senior Employment Programs, faith community, homeless programs, grandparent groups, hospitals and rehab facilities, and disease groups
- Work with and educate hospital systems to ensure that older adults learn about the Title III nutrition programs
- Continued collaboration and education to Managed Care Organizations to educate them how to refer seniors for congregate meals or home delivered meals.
- Increase SNAP outreach by targeting SNAP-eligible home delivered meal recipients with a sticker on their food that directs them to an AgeOptions representative to learn more.

## **Area Agency on Aging Programs and Services**

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### **Supportive Services**

#### ***Funded by Title III-B of the Older Americans Act and Illinois General Revenue Fund***

The following services provide older adults with the support they need to remain at home and in their communities as long as possible and prevent premature institutionalization. Supportive services listed below are provided by community service partners and delivered with AgeOptions direction and leadership with the exception of Information and Assistance, which is provided by both AgeOptions and community service partners.

- **Aging Disability Resource Centers funded for Information and Assistance, Options Counseling, Senior Health Assistance Program:** Provides answers to questions and connects older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers to programs and services.
- **Chore/Housekeeping:** Assistance keeping an older person’s home clean and functional.

- **Counseling:** Personal counsel to help individuals and families cope with personal problems and/or develop and strengthen capacities for more adequate social and personal adjustments.
- **Education:** Opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills suited to interests and capabilities through formally structured, group-oriented lectures or classes.
- **Friendly Visiting:** Volunteers regularly visit and socialize with homebound older adults.
- **Home Repair:** Minor modifications to allow older adults to remain safely in the community.
- **Housing Assistance:** Information about available housing options for older adults.
- **Legal Assistance:** Assistance in settling non-criminal legal matters, protection of legal rights, advocacy and education.
- **Recreation:** Activities which foster the health and social well-being of individuals through social interaction and constructive use of time.
- **Respite Care:** In-home or out-of-home care to allow family and friends who care for older adults to take some time away from care giving.
- **Senior Centers:** Community centers where older adults gather to enjoy social and recreational activities, dine, attend classes and take part in health and wellness programs.
- **Senior Opportunity and Services:** Identifies at-risk older adults and connects them to existing services and programs.
- **Targeting to Culturally and Linguistically Isolated Persons (TCLIP):** Identifies and connects older adults who speak little to no English with culturally competent services and programs through translation, referrals and assistance in applying for services and benefits. AgeOptions funds TCLIP agencies under the Senior Opportunities and Services (SOS) program and under the Title III-C Nutrition program.
- **Telephone Reassurance:** Calls to check in with older adults who are isolated.
- **Transportation:** Rides for older adults to community centers, dining locations and medical appointments.

## **Senior Health Assistance Program (SHAP) and Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA)**

***Funded by Illinois General Revenue Fund, Tobacco Settlement Funds, Administration for Community Living (ACL) and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services***

AgeOptions coordinates an area-wide campaign with local agencies to reach older adults and people with disabilities with information about programs that assist with the cost of prescription medications. These programs include Medicare Part D, Low Income Subsidy (“Extra Help”), Patient Assistance Programs and Medicare Savings Programs. SHAP also includes assistance with enrollment into the Benefit Access Program that assists with transportation costs such as Seniors Ride Free, People with Disabilities Ride Free and the license plate sticker discount. Staff at AgeOptions and local community partner agencies conduct outreach, community education and provide one-on-one assistance to older adults applying for all of the above-mentioned programs. SHAP is a mainstay of consumer assistance to identify the best prescription plan possible, to meet deadlines for applying and to assure annual confirmation that a person’s plan will cover their prescription.

SHAP is integrated into the Aging and Disability Resource Network (ADRN), which is comprised of Information and Assistance, Options Counseling and SHAP. All agencies that serve under the Aging Disability Resource Network (ADRN) designation are Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) sites. Funding through the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) will allow AgeOptions and the Aging Disability Resource Network (ADRN) sites that provide SHAP services to promote Medicare Part B Prevention and Wellness benefits to consumers, caregivers and professionals in suburban Cook County by conducting presentations and disseminating written materials.

## **Nutrition Services**

### ***Funded by Title III-C of the Older Americans Act, Nutrition Services Incentive Program and Illinois General Revenue Fund for Home Delivered Meals***

- **Congregate Nutrition Services:** AgeOptions funds community dining options, often referred to as “congregate meals”, at a variety of locations throughout suburban Cook County. Of these congregate sites, seven offer “ethnic” meals to serve a specific cultural community. All sites offer freshly served, balanced hot meals, education and information on benefits, plus social engagement and activities.
- **Home Delivered Meals Services:** Provide nutritious meals to older adults who are homebound and unable to shop for groceries or prepare meals on their own. At most home delivered meal programs, volunteers deliver lunchtime meals daily and conduct wellness checks to ensure client safety. We now offer therapeutic diets such as diabetic, gluten free and renal meals throughout our service area. In addition, two programs offer “ethnic” home delivered meals to serve a specific cultural community. [Note that AgeOptions funds Home Delivered Meals in all townships of suburban Cook County except for Barrington; the Barrington Area Council on Aging provides the “Barrington Area Meals with Wheels” program without Title III funding.] Currently, there are no waiting lists for home delivered meals.
- **Emergency Shelf-Stable Meals:** These are provided to all congregate and home- delivered meal clients to ensure each participant has a minimum of five days of shelf stable meals in the event of emergencies, weather-related

conditions, pandemics, or civil unrest that would prevent the delivery of their home delivered meals or attendance at congregate meal sites. These meals meet 1/3 of the current Dietary reference Intakes (DRIs). These meals have a six-month shelf life and will be distributed to participants twice a year. Grantee will communicate to participants as to when they should consume an emergency meal. When Grantee has called for three days' worth of meals to be consumed, Grantee will communicate to AgeOptions so that the meals may be replenished.

- **Grocery Delivery:** AgeOptions began bi-monthly deliveries of groceries in mid-FY20. The program targets home-bound clients who are able to and interested in cooking for themselves. The program has proven very popular, cost effective and adaptable to population preferences. This led AgeOptions to seek a three-year grant from the Administration for Community Living to explore how home-delivered groceries could become a sustainable program supported by the Older Americans Act. We are continuing the program as a pilot project under three-year grant.
- **Senior Farmers Market Coupons:** AgeOptions works with the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) and community organizations to distribute Senior Farmers Market Program coupons during the summer months. These coupons can be redeemed by older adults for \$25 worth of fresh produce and fruit at participating local farmers markets.

For FY 2022, the Governor proposed additional home delivered meal funding. We continue to be concerned whether there will be sufficient funds to cover our growing special diets, ethnic meals, second and weekend meals. Grantees also are concerned about the impact of the minimum wage increase on their salaries, salary compression, increased costs related to catering/food, cost of Personal Protective Equipment and sanitation.

## **Health Promotion and Disease Prevention**

### ***Funded by Title III-D of the Older Americans Act***

AgeOptions will continue to fund a Countywide Health Promotion Coordinator agency which will deliver evidence-based self-management programming such as Take Charge of your Health and Take Charge of Your Diabetes (& Diabetes Plus), as well as fall prevention programming such as A Matter of Balance Tai Chi for Arthritis, Active Living Every Day Physical Activity Program and Fit and Strong! Program.

The Countywide Health Promotion staff will work with AgeOptions direct service waiver program which provides information and self-management skills for older adults with ongoing conditions and their caregivers using the evidence-based Chronic Disease Self-Management model created by Stanford University.

## **Caregiver Support Program / Relatives Raising Children**

### ***Funded by Title III-E of the Older Americans Act and General Revenue Funds***

The National Family Caregiver Support Program serves family and friends who care for persons aged 60 and over or people with Alzheimer's disease (or a related disorder with neurological or organic brain dysfunction) at any age. The program also provides support to grandparents and other non-parent relatives over the age of 55 who are caring for children under 19 or adults 19-59 years old with a disability. The Caregiver Support Program encompasses the following:

- AgeOptions supports and coordinates counseling, outreach, respite, education and training, support groups, gap-filling services and legal assistance.
- AgeOptions mandates that all designated Caregiver Resource Centers utilize the Tailored Caregiver Assessment and Referral (TCARE) tool as the standardized assessment for caregiver clients.
- The AgeOptions Caregiver Programs Coordinator assists Caregiver Specialists at designated Caregiver Resource Centers countywide and reaches out to the community to increase awareness of caregiver programs.
- AgeOptions has consultants to provide additional training and education programs such as legal support or how to use assistive technology devices. We continue to explore providing additional trainings on "hands on" caregiving issues. As State of Illinois General Revenue Funds continue to be available, AgeOptions and Caregiver Resource Centers provide additional gap-filling services to assist relatives raising children and caregivers of those with Alzheimer's disease and Related Disorders (ARD).
- AgeOptions continues to support interdisciplinary caregiver work through Caregiver Collaborative meetings

**Continuation of new programming:** The Governor's Budget message included funding for Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders. AgeOptions will continue to use these funds in two ways: First, we will require Caregiver Resource Centers to be trained in and provide annual Savvy Caregiver and/or Stress Busting for Family Caregivers, both evidence based workshop series. Second, Caregiver Resource Centers will have funding to provide gap filling for people with Dementia and their caregivers.

## **Long Term Care Ombudsman Program**

***Funded by Title VII of the Older Americans Act***

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program advocates for and on behalf of facility residents ages 60 and older and adults 18-59 with disabilities. The Ombudsman Program promotes quality of life for long-term care residents of nursing facilities by:

- Resolving resident and family complaints as well as systemic advocacy
- Promoting individualized care
- Promotion and cultivation of best practices
- Promotion of family and community involvement in long-term care facilities
- Outlining resident rights
- Conducting community education regarding the role of the Ombudsman Program
- Supporting the development of resident and family councils

- Providing a regular presence in long-term care facilities

For FY 22, AgeOptions budgeted Long Term Care Provider Funds at the same level as FY 21. These funds support the efforts listed above across long-term care facilities and in the community.

AgeOptions attends the Quarterly Regional Ombudsman Meetings and provides technical assistance to Regional Ombudsman. AgeOptions distributes written materials and conducts presentations in the community, as well as refers complaints to the appropriate Regional Ombudsmen or to similarly appropriate resources.

## **Adult Protective Services Program**

### ***Illinois General Revenue Fund***

The Adult Protective Services Act went into effect on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013. It expanded the Elder Abuse and Neglect program to include investigation of reported cases of abuse, neglect and exploitation for individuals with disabilities ages 18-59. In addition, the APS Act was amended on July 1, 2018 to include investigations of reported self-neglect. Specially trained case managers at nine (9) local Adult Protective Services Provider Agencies:

- Receive and respond to reports of adult protective services abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation
- Provide investigation, intervention and follow up services to victims through partnerships with local law enforcement and service agencies
- Help resolve problems between victims and their substantiated abuser(s), including appropriate service plans to aid individuals in need
- Provide appropriate follow up services through the use of Emergency Intervention Service (EIS) funds
- Organize, conduct and participate in eight multidisciplinary Team meetings per calendar year
- Receive and respond to Suspicious Death Reports

Adult Protective Services includes the following:

- **24/7 Adult Protective Services Hotline:** APS agencies provide 24/7 coverage. Each designated Adult Protective Services Agency created a plan to receive and respond to reports of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect in which an eligible adult is at risk for injury or death, at any time such a report is received, including after normal business hours and on weekends and holidays.
- **Abuse Fatality Review Teams:** AgeOptions coordinates the Suburban Cook County Fatality Review Team (FRT), as required by the Department on Aging. A FRT's purpose is to conduct reviews of adult deaths who were "at risk" because of abusive actions in their homes. This will assist local agencies in identifying and reviewing suspicious deaths of adult victims of alleged, suspected or substantiated abuse or neglect in domestic living situations. The team will also facilitate communications between officials responsible for autopsies and inquests and persons involved in reporting or investigating alleged or suspected

cases of abuse, neglect or financial exploitation of at-risk adults and persons involved in providing services to at-risk adults. This multi-disciplinary team meeting reviews cases and may produce actions to ameliorate the negative findings witnessed in the case study, but also bring forth formal recommendations to reevaluate policy, procedures, and standards as performed in the field at local and state levels.

## **Community Care Program (CCP) / Comprehensive Care Coordination**

AgeOptions uses Systems Development Funding to support the Illinois Department on Aging's administration of the Community Care Program (CCP). CCP provides in-home and community-based services to eligible Illinois seniors, age 60 and over with limited assets and assessed need for long term care. The services under CCP are aimed at assisting seniors to maintain their independence, provide cost effective alternatives to nursing home placement and support the ability to age-in-place. Services include Adult Day Care, Automated Medication Dispensers, Emergency Home Response and In-home services provided by home care workers.

As part of the Systems Development grant, AgeOptions provides on-site certification of agencies applying to be CCP vendors for Adult Day Care and home care services on behalf of IDOA under the All Willing and Qualified (AWAQ) procurement provisions.

## Estimated AgeOptions Units and Clients by Service

	Projected FY 22 units	Projected Clients for FY 22
<b>Social Services (Title III-B)</b>		
ADRN/Information & Assistance	193,867	75,000
ADRN/Options Counseling	3,276	350
	1,000	3,000
Chore	30,000	1,000
Education	4,800	1,000
Friendly Visiting	300	30
Housing Assistance	2018	380
Legal Assistance	5,098	700
Home Repair	267	200
Recreation	4,800	1000
Respite	2,646	160
Senior Center		300
Senior Opportunity & Services	5,000	500
Targeting to Culturally and Linguistically Isolated	12,123	4,000
Telephone Reassurance	300	30
Transportation	30,000	2,000
<b>Caregiver Support Services (Title III-E)</b>		
Counseling for Caregivers	4,919	1,150
Counseling for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren	47	16
Gap-filling 60+ caregivers	83	82
Gap-filling Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders(ADRD)	88	88
Legal Assistance Relatives Raising Children	827	86
One on One Outreach	2,562	2,145
Respite using 3e funds	2,849	158
Respite using 3b funds	2,865	159
Support Groups for Caregivers	1,338	350
Support Groups for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren	216	50
Training and Education provided by Consultants	602	359

Training and Education for Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders	788	470
Training and Education provided by CRC	1,205	719
Training and Education for GRG	52	28
<b>Long Term Care Ombudsman Service</b>		
Ombudsman		
<b>Nutrition Services (Title III-C)</b>		
Congregate Meals (to be counted under HDM during pandemic)	1,216,093	16,818
Home Delivered Meals (subtotal)		4,749
Monday - Friday	659,582	4,042
Second Meals	91,997	891
Weekend Meals	33,397	489
Special Diets	72,727	559
Ethnic Meals	3,333	44
Shelf Stable	26,667	2,667
<b>Health Promotion/Disease Prevention Title III-D</b>		
Health Promotion	2,931	700
<b>Title VII I-Team</b>		
APS Interdisciplinary teams		

## AgeOptions Funding of Grants and Services

There are three components to AgeOptions grantee's funding:

1. **Funds provided by AgeOptions:**
  - Federal Older Americans Act
  - State General Revenue Funds
2. **Funds "matched" by the Grantee:**

Local Cash: includes funding from non-federal sources such as organizations, municipalities, townships, United Ways, etc., that provide direct support for service costs.

In-kind: includes the value of property or services that benefit a grant-supported service and are contributed by non-federal parties.

3. **Funds provided by the Clients:** includes client contributions that are made toward the cost of the received service.

## **How AgeOptions Receives Funds**

AgeOptions receives allocations of both state and federal funding through the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA). Funds for programs under Titles III-B Supportive Services, III-C1 Congregate Meals, III-C2 Home Delivered Meals, III-E Caregiver, and Illinois General Revenue Funding for community-based services and home delivered meals are allocated to the Area Agencies on Aging by the Illinois Department on Aging using a weighted, population-based formula. The Department reviews the formula every three years prior to the submittal of a new State Plan on Aging. These funding levels are subject to change.

Specific factors used in the IDoA formula include the number of people in each Planning and Service Area (PSA) represented by each Area Agency:

- Over the age of 60 (41% of funding)
- Over the age of 75 (7.5% of funding)
- 60 + racially/ethnically diverse (10% of funding)
- 60 + in poverty (25% of funding)
- 60 + living alone (7.5%)
- 60 + rural (9% of funding)

Other programs are funded using these factors:

- Ombudsman Program (number of licensed long term care beds and facilities)
- Title III-D Health Promotion (the percent the 60+ population is of the total population and the share of 60+ population in poverty)
- Title VII Elder Abuse and Neglect (number of assigned Multi-Disciplinary Teams)
- Community-Based Services General Revenue Fund (fixed and weighted allocations)
- Senior Health Assistance Program (base plus Medicare recipients)
- Nutrition Services Incentive Program (based on the meals served in the prior fiscal year and the national level of funding available)
- Special or one-time only funds (such as the Illinois General Revenue Funds for gap-filling services for grandparents of any age)

## **How AgeOptions Distributes Funds**

AgeOptions uses a population-based funding formula to determine the maximum available dollars to each area in suburban Cook County for Supportive Services (Title III-B) and Caregiver Services (Title III-E). The factors and weights of AgeOptions funding formula remain the same as previous years:

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Weight</b>
60+	30%
65+ 124% poverty	35%
60+ Racially/Ethnically Diverse	15%
75+	10%
60+ living alone	10%
TOTAL	100%

Funds are distributed using the formula for each of the 30 townships (with North and South Proviso broken into two areas) in suburban Cook County.

### **AgeOptions Procurement Process**

AgeOptions maintains a list of organization interested in receiving notices of funding opportunities/Requests for Proposals (RFP). AgeOptions issues Requests for Proposals approximately every three to four years and administers an application or letter of intent process to identify agencies to receive Older Americans Act and State of Illinois funds to provide services. AgeOptions may issue Request for Proposals for the following services and time periods:

<b>Programs</b>	<b>RFP Issued</b>	<b>Date for Service to Begin</b>	<b>Estimated Time Period</b>
Nutrition	Winter 2023	October 1, 2023	FY 24-26
Supportive Services (Title III-B), Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (Title III-D), Caregiver Support Program (Title III-E), and Senior Health Assistance Program/MIPPA (SHAP), Long Term Care Ombudsman	Winter 2022	October 1, 2022	FY 23-25
Adult Protective Services			
Care Coordination Unit and	To be determined. Will be done in conjunction with IDOA.		

### **National and State Issues Impacting Fiscal Year 2022 Funding**

**Federal Older Americans Act Funding source: *National Council on Aging March 16, 2021 Public Policy statements and National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (N4A) March 25, 2021 Letter to House and Senate Appropriations Committees***

***Federal Policy Update:***

While it would have been best if there was no COVID-19, pandemic, AgeOptions has been fortunate to be the recipient of increased state and federal funding and benefitted from flexibility with funding to provide services in response to the emergent needs of our older adult constituents and their caregivers. This funding has come to us through the CARES Act. It is anticipated that additional funding may become available through the American Rescue Plan.

According to the National Council on the Aging, public policy statement dated, March 16, 2021, 11 million older adults and their caregivers rely on Older Americans Act funded programs and services. Currently, the Older Americans Act has \$750 million designated for Title III C Nutrition Services; \$460 million for Title III B Supportive Services; \$145 million for Title III E National Caregiver Support; \$44 million for evidenced-based health promotion and disease prevention programs including falls prevention and chronic disease, many of which AgeOptions is a service delivery partner and \$10 million designated for long-term Ombudsman programs.

The CARES Act, according to a March 25, 2021 letter composed by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (N4A) praises the opportunities provided to the aging network. The impact of access of COVID relief dollars is reported to have had a 50% increase in participation nationwide in Older Americans Act programs. In addition, many older adults were eligible for stimulus checks and the beneficiary of SNAP benefit increases. The American Rescue Plan extends the emergency 15% increase in SNAP benefits through September 2021.

### **State of Illinois General Revenue Fund (GRF)**

Governor Pritzker's FY 22 budget in relationship to the Illinois Department on Aging calls for an \$11.3 million for the expansion of Home Delivered Meals to meet the increased demand as a result of COVID 19 and to address waiting lists in two planning and service areas. \$5 million to continue addressing seniors' emergency needs through the Emergency Senior Services Program. \$1 million to add Assistive Technology to the Community Care Program.

In addressing the financial needs of the in-home care workforce, effective January 1, 2022, a rate increase is planned for the state's Community Care Program to support the \$15.00 per hour in the minimum wage. Additionally, \$204 thousand to allow for the continuation of the Senior Employment program at \$15 per hour and \$2.4 million to address minimum wage increase within Older American services programming.

The budget also calls for the CCP services rates to be increased to \$24.96 per hour for in-home services, Adult Day Services \$15.30 per hour, and Adult Day Services Transportation rate to \$11.29 per trip.

### **Budget Assumptions**

AgeOptions used the following budget assumptions to estimate a funding level for FY22:

- **Title Transfers:** AgeOptions is allowed to transfer funds among three federal Older Americans Act Programs: Title III-B (Supportive Services), Title III-C1 (Congregate Meals) and Title III-C2 (Home Delivered Meals). These transfers do not affect the total funding available in suburban Cook County, but do allow some latitude in effectively planning programs as well as enable AgeOptions to maintain historical levels of service.

Since the consolidation of Supportive and Nutrition Services in 1978, AgeOptions has transferred funds from Congregate Nutrition Services to Supportive Services and Home Delivered Meals. We are requesting a waiver of the 20% transfer cap between Title III-C1 to Title III-B from the Illinois Department on Aging. The requested transfer for FY22 is \$913,557 from Congregate Nutrition Services (C1) to Supportive Services (3B). This is the same level of transfer as previous fiscal years.

- **Budget by Title:** All budgets were based on the Illinois Department on Aging (IDOA) draft allocations released April 5, 2021. The Title III-B Ombudsman, Title III-B Community Based, Title III-C1 Congregate, Title III-C2 Home Delivered, Title III-D Health Promotion, Title III-E Caregiver, Title VII APS, Title VII Ombudsman and NSIP were based on the actual FY 2021 awards from the Administration for Community Living to IDOA. The State General Revenue Allocations are based on the Governor's proposed FY 2022 budget for IDOA. These allocation amounts may change as the final FY 2022 state budget is negotiated and enacted. The MIPPA for ADRN was estimated at FY 21 levels. Long Term Care Provider Fund for Ombudsman was based on FY 21 levels granted to PSA 13.

## Estimated AgeOptions Funding by Service

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### How AgeOptions will Administer Increased or Decreased Funding

The following section outlines how AgeOptions proposes to administer increases and decreases in funding for the following programs: Title III-C1 Congregate Meals and Title III-C2 Home Delivered Meals.\*

- Increased Funding: AgeOptions will determine the amount of funds to be made available for Congregate and Home Delivered Meals either by service area, by demand and/or for targeted populations, using the following in awarding funds.
  - Expand special diet, ethnic, shelf stable, weekend/and or second meals and/or
  - Develop new ethnic Congregate Meal sites
  - Provide Targeted demonstration funding
  - Allow Grantees to submit formal requests and rationale to expand current services within the amounts determined available by AgeOptions. Decisions regarding increases shall be made after considering the rationale, overall performance and support provided to the community by the Grantee and/or
  - Develop a Request for Proposal for distribution of increased funds.
- Decreased Funding: If funding to the suburban Cook County region is reduced, and it is necessary to reduce Grantee award levels, AgeOptions will:
  - Redistribute funding if a grantee is not meeting productivity goals.

- Review each grant based on service levels and/or other performance factors to assure that there will be cost effective service provision that best meets the needs of older adults.
- Ask the assessing agencies to review the needs of clients who received meals on a short-term basis, e.g. following an illness or surgery, to determine if the meals are still necessary.
- Review clients who have second or weekend meals to determine if other options are available to them.
- Prioritize clients based on need and targeting factors such as low income, limited English speaking, living alone and/or minority.
- Reduce meals in the following order - second meals, weekend meals, Monday through Friday meals and/or special diet meals.

**The following section outlines how AgeOptions proposes to administer increases and decreases in funding for the following programs:** Title III-B – Supportive Services, Title III-D – Health Promotion, Title III-E – Caregiver, General Revenue Funds for Community-based Services and AgeOptions Direct Service funding and AgeOptions Administration funding.\*

- **Increased Funding:** If there is an increase in available funding, based on the level of increase, AgeOptions will determine the amount of funds to be made available either by area, by service and/or for targeted populations and will use one of the following options in awarding those funds:
  - Provide Targeted demonstration funding
  - Provide proportional increases for grantees
  - Allow grantee/contractors to submit formal requests and rationale to expand current services and/or for unit rate increases within the amounts determined available by AgeOptions. Decisions regarding increases shall be made after considering the overall performance and support provided to the community by the grantee/contractor.
  - Develop a Request for Proposal for distribution of increased funds.
- **Decreased Funding:** If funding is reduced to the suburban Cook County region during a grant or contract year, and it is necessary to reduce grantee award levels, AgeOptions will determine a reduction strategy that may reduce funding to each area on a straight percentage basis, or reduce or eliminate services that are deemed to not be effectively delivered upon such a reduction of funds. AgeOptions reserves the right to establish new criteria for reductions for each extension year.

\*Due to unpredictable changes in the local, national and worldwide environment AgeOptions cannot use its funding formula at all times.

**The following section outlines how AgeOptions proposes to administer increases and decreases in funding for the following programs:** Title VII - Adult Protective Services, Title VII- Long Term Care Ombudsman:

- **Increased Funding:** If there is an increase in available funding, AgeOptions will provide proportional increases for grantees.
- **Decreased Funding:** If funding is reduced to the suburban Cook County region during a grant or contract year, and it is necessary to reduce grantee award

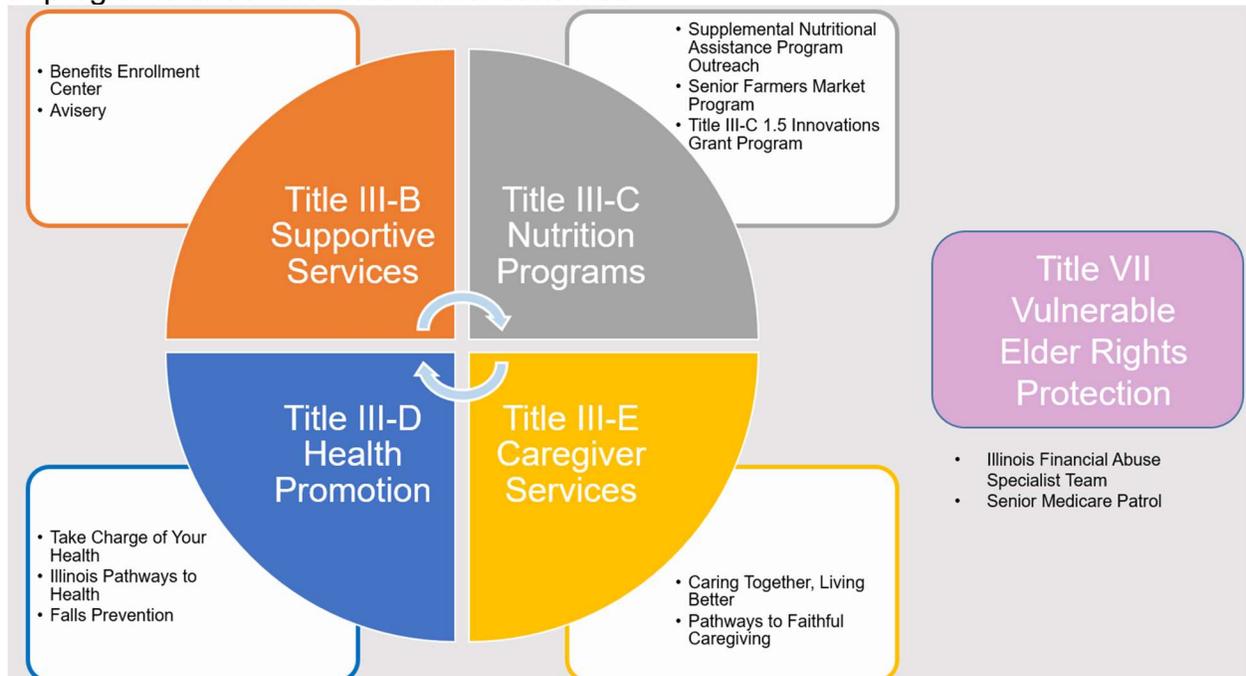
levels, AgeOptions apply proportional decreases to grantees. AgeOptions reserves the right to establish new criteria for reductions for each extension year.

## **Information on Funding Possibilities**

While AgeOptions main sources of funding are the federal Older Americans Act and Illinois General Revenue Funds, AgeOptions has made progress in securing grant funds from sources other than the Older Americans Act to enhance current programs and develop new programs. AgeOptions has a variety of innovative programs that respond to the rich diversity of our communities. See appendix for a description of AgeOptions Signature programs. In addition, AgeOptions Board has a Resource Development Committee and is working to expand fee for service programs related to our non-Older Americans Act programs.

### ***AgeOptions Signature Programs***

The Older Americans Act Programs are presented below. The programs are not equally funded, but their importance is significant and are considered the foundation for all aging services in our region. The associated boxes are the activities AgeOptions has adopted to assure that our region is doing all we can do to bring services to older persons. The chart below shows how AgeOptions signature programs augment the Title III programs under the Older Americans Act.



## **Administrative Funds**

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## **Administrative Direct Service Activities**

The Older Americans Act restricts Agency administration costs to 10% of the Title III allocation and permits Area Agencies on Aging to provide “administratively related direct services” of Advocacy, Coordination, and Program Development. For FY22, the Illinois Department on Aging caps AgeOptions use of “Administratively related direct services” at \$2,643,694. The AgeOptions allocation for Title III administratively related direct service is \$1,087,527 and is 41% of the maximum cap for FY22 set by the Illinois Department on Aging for administratively direct services

For FY22, AgeOptions is allocating for Title III-B Direct Service, which includes Advocacy \$279,130; Coordination \$208,762; and Program Development \$599,635. .

## **Direct Services**

**Information and Assistance:** AgeOptions provides Title III-B and E Information and Assistance responding to the necessity for a central access point to services in suburban Cook County. Negotiating the service system in an area comprised of 30 townships, 130 municipalities and hundreds of providers can be very confusing for an older person or a concerned loved one. The direct service funding for Information and Assistance supports staff at AgeOptions in responding to callers and walk-in clients and through email; maintaining and distributing a wide variety of informational and educational materials; providing technical support to funded partners. AgeOptions maintains a staff person who is a certified Information and Assistance Specialist for Aging and Disabilities (CIRS A/D).

The funding also supports part of the cost of maintaining a computerized resource inventory.

AgeOptions is allocating \$191,678 for Title III-B Information and Assistance and \$23,473 for Title III-E Information and Assistance. We project providing 5,000 units of service to 4,200 clients for III-B and III-E Information and Assistance. AgeOptions implemented iCarol, a new software program to house our information and assistance resource directory. The iCarol system includes a public resource directory that will be available on our website. In recognition that consumers are increasingly searching online to locate resources, this feature will increase ability to self-serve while also ensuring the information they are receiving has been maintained by a trusted source. We will be adapting new ways to draw in consumers to speak with information & assistance specialists to ensure they are connected to the full range of services available. For example, our updated website increased the visibility on each page to connect help seekers with information and assistance services.

**Health Promotion and Disease Prevention:** AgeOptions is requesting a direct service waiver to provide Title III-D Health Promotion and Disease Prevention services through our Illinois Pathways to Health platform which include Take Charge of Your Health (CDSMP), Take Charge of your Diabetes (DSMP), Take Charge of your Pain (CPSMP) and falls prevention programming to include A Matter of Balance (MOB), Tai Chi for Arthritis and Bingocize. For 16 years, AgeOptions has taken a lead on providing the evidence-based Chronic Disease and Diabetes Self-Management program as well as

the Spanish-language Tomando Control de su Salud and Tomando Control de se Diabetes throughout suburban Cook County. In 2019, AgeOptions received an ACL grant to add fall prevention programming to our suite of offerings. To date, under AgeOptions leadership, 11,559 older adults and their families have been reached with the program. Our strong partnerships throughout suburban Cook County will allow AgeOptions to reach a diverse group of older adults across the region.

AgeOptions is a leader in the delivery of evidence-based programs. For example, AgeOptions has been awarded its third ACL CDSME grant to increase the offerings of CDSMP and DSMP across the state and sustain efforts with innovative funding arrangements with health care providers and other entities. AgeOptions has also received an ACL Falls-Prevention Grant. Our website, [ilpathwaystohealth.org](http://ilpathwaystohealth.org), has become the go-to location to showcase statewide evidence-based programming including the Matter of Balance program and Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) for Seniors.

As a result of prior grants and activities, AgeOptions has trained a network of workshop facilitators who implement the Take Charge of Your Health and Take Charge of Your Diabetes programs (CDSMP & DSMP) throughout suburban Cook County. AgeOptions works with this network of facilitators (comprised of volunteers and professionals) to ensure fidelity is maintained at each workshop. Each facilitator is also provided technical assistance regarding marketing and outreach to maximize recruitment of participants.

The direct service funding for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention supports staff at AgeOptions to coordinate the Take Charge of Your Health/Diabetes programs (including full compliance with Self-Management Resource Center's program guidelines); provide expert training and technical assistance to workshop facilitators; collaborate with local partners; facilitate Take Charge of Your Health/Diabetes and falls prevention workshops such as Matter of Balance and Healthy Steps in Motion; and expand outreach efforts to engage diverse groups of older adults throughout suburban Cook County. AgeOptions will leverage the Title III-D funds in order to provide a larger program with community and voluntary resources.

AgeOptions is requesting a direct service waiver of \$71,120 from Title III-D to support Take Charge of Your Health programs as well as to provide coordination and publicity of all Title III-D activities in suburban Cook County. We project providing 735 units of service to 150 clients for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention.

## Appendix

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### Additional AgeOptions Programs

**Benefits Enrollment Center:** The National Council on Aging awarded AgeOptions funding for two projects that sustain the Benefit Enrollment Center (BEC) and Senior Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Enrollment Initiative. The BEC offers person centered counseling to find, screen and enroll both seniors and persons with

disabilities who have limited income and resources into available benefit programs. The primary focus is on the following programs: Medicare Part D Extra Help (or Low-Income Subsidy, LIS), Medicare Savings Programs (MSP), Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP).

**Senior Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Enrollment Initiative:**

The National Council on Aging awarded AgeOptions funding through the Walmart Foundation for a project that addresses food insecurity among older adults by providing outreach and enrollment assistance into the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The primary focus is on increasing the number of older adults enrolled in SNAP. This funding is used in conjunction with the BEC funding to provide comprehensive benefits outreach and assistance to older adults and individuals with disabilities.

**Caring Together, Living Better (CTLB):** Caring Together, Living Better focuses on the development of partnerships between faith-based and community organizations to build on caregiver support services already provided through the National Family Caregiver Support Program in the Older Americans Act. Caring Together, Living Better connects difficult to reach caregivers to these services through the faith community and community partners. With the support of the RRF Foundation for Aging, Healthy Communities Foundation, the Westlake Health Foundation, and now the CARES Act of 2020 there are currently 6 partners serving the west suburban communities of Bellwood, Berwyn, Cicero, Maywood, and Melrose Park. Our partners provide volunteer-based caregiver education and support programs including three churches with large African American congregations, one church with both African-American and Latino congregants, and two Latino social service organizations.

Caring Together, Living Better (CTLB) was founded in 2009 by AgeOptions with Weinberg Foundation funding in partnership with South Suburban Senior Services of Catholic Charities, Metropolitan Family Services Southwest and CJE SeniorLife. During its first three years, CTLB provided approximately 241 caregivers of older adults with 3,273 units of volunteer-based services including training and support groups, home-delivered meals, transportation and respite care. Most of the south suburban church-based volunteer programs continue to operate although the south suburban grant funding has ended. Due to overwhelming success in supporting local caregivers, these programs have become embedded in their organizations and communities and are supported through individual donations, fundraisers, township contributions and other methods. The west suburban replication of CTLB started in 2013, and in fiscal year 2020 alone, served over 3,000 west suburban caregivers and family members, a significant increase from prior years due to high need brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to the volunteer-based services for caregivers, AgeOptions worked with the CTLB Leadership Council to develop programming to reduce social isolation for caregivers and older adult family members during the pandemic. Partners hosted Zoom events to bring people together virtually which focused on activities such as music therapy, chair yoga, and more. Some partners also hosted meal and care package pickup events and COVID-19 testing events in response to increased challenges during the health crisis. AgeOptions continues to strengthen the partnership between CTLB

sites and our designated Caregiver Resource Centers to promote referrals and ensure that caregivers and family members that attend CTLB events know they can explore additional resources through their local Caregiver Resource Center or Aging and Disability Resource Center. A representative from the Caregiver Resource Center side of Aging Care Connections in the western suburbs and a representative from the Aging and Disability Resource Center side of Solutions for Care in the western suburbs attend our monthly CTLB Leadership Council Meetings. Each CTLB partner will work with their local Caregiver Resource Center or with an AgeOptions staff member to co-host an Evidence Based Workshop series for their caregivers including Stress Busting for Family Caregivers, Take Charge of Your Health, etc.

**Care Coordination under the Colbert and Williams Consent Decrees:** In 2020, AgeOptions applied for and was given the opportunity to a PRIME entity under a combined Colbert and Williams implementation plan. As a PRIME, AgeOptions together with several of our partnering Care Coordination Units are responsible for nursing home resident engagement where the resident considers transition to the community; a comprehensive assessment of the physical, behavioral and psycho-social needs and potential home and community services to meet these needs when transitioned to community residency; assistance in establishing and setting-up a community residence and follow-up and monitoring of the transitioned class member and former nursing home resident to ensure his/her health, welfare and safety. AgeOptions has branded our work as a PRIME entity, H.O.P.E. representing Home Options Path to Empowerment.

The Colbert and Williams Consent Decrees represent advocates for the rights of nursing home residents to live in the least restrictive environments in line with the 1999 federal Supreme Court Olmstead Decision. There are many residents residing in institutional settings that may have needed the care on day of admission, find themselves continuing to reside in institutional settings and could do well in the community with the support of community-based services and medical and behavioral health services.

**Emergency Preparedness:** AgeOptions continues to review and revise our Disaster Operations Plan on a regular basis. AgeOptions and our community agencies we fund will use a Continuity of Operations Plan to be able to serve older adults during an emergency when offices may be closed due to a disaster. AgeOptions developed a web page to provide tools and information for the community agencies that we fund, as well as tips and resources for various emergency situations: <https://www.ageoptions.org/support-resources/emergency-preparedness/>. AgeOptions works to increase capacity building among the aging and disability networks when it comes to emergency planning. A member of the AgeOptions Advisory Council is working with AgeOptions planning staff to promote a fire safety routine to be utilized by first responders when they engage with senior community members.

**Avisery by AgeOptions:** Since 1999, AgeOptions has educated professionals and consumers on how to navigate the various health care coverage options available to older adults. As state and federal governments have sought to increase consumer

choice and control health care costs, it has become increasingly difficult for older adults to make informed choices about the insurance options that best meets their needs. While cost is a factor to consider, consumers also need information about: 1) whether current health care providers are in-network; 2) whether medications are covered; 3) deadlines for enrolling in different coverage; and 4) eligibility for financial assistance programs to help cover out-of-pocket costs. The frequent introduction of new health insurance plans and revisions to existing policies adds levels of complexity to the public health insurance benefits system.

To help them make the right choices, older adults rely on health insurance counselors and other professionals in aging services organizations for support. Avisery by AgeOptions provides education, training, and technical assistance to these professionals, enabling them to help their clients access affordable healthcare coverage that allows them to thrive as they age. Avisery provides this impartial education to professionals through various avenues, including trainings, webinars, technical assistance, and informational email alerts.

Through interaction with these professionals and their clients, Avisery gathers data on unintended consequences, barriers to access, and implementation failures that plague the health benefits system. Avisery leverages its relationships with public officials, agency employees, and health plan representatives to resolve situations for individual beneficiaries. Additionally, through participation in advocacy coalitions, Avisery works towards system changes at the health plan, state, and federal levels.

In order to diversify our funding and reach new populations with critical healthcare information and assistance, Avisery is utilizing our experience and expertise developed from these 19 years to provide trainings and presentations on Medicare and Medicaid to financial planners, healthcare providers, insurance companies and other for-profit entities on a fee-for-service basis. This fee for service revenue helps ensure our services are affordable and accessible to community-based entities that serve low income, vulnerable older adults and people with disabilities throughout Illinois.

### **Fatality Review Team**

The Suburban Cook Adult Fatality Review Team examines deaths associated with suspected abuse and or neglect of adults with disabilities (ages 18-59) and older adults (ages 60+) residing in Suburban Cook County. The Illinois Adult Protective Services Act ([320 ILCS 20/15](#)) has been amended to outline the team structure and responsibilities. Meetings are coordinated by AgeOptions, occur on a quarterly basis, and adhere the Illinois Open Meetings Act. Term appointed professionals from a multitude of disciplines collaborate to review cases and then provide detailed recommendations to the Department on Aging. This approach incorporates systems-level changes to improve the public response for victims of abuse and or neglect and prevent similar outcomes in the future.

Members include the representatives from the following agencies: Cook County Medical Examiner's Office, Cook County Department of Public Health, Cook County State's Attorney Office, Cook County Office of Public Guardian, Cook County Sheriff Police

Department, Loyola University School of Nursing, , Oak Forest Fire Department, Mount Prospect Police Department, Tinley Park Police Department, Stickney Public Health District, Illinois Department on Aging, West Suburban Hospital, Suburban Access, Inc., Kenneth Young Center, Catholic Charities South Suburban, Equip for Equality, Legal Aid Chicago, Gareda Homecare, Addus Homecare and AgeOptions.

### **Illinois Financial Abuse Specialist Team (iFAST)**

The Illinois Financial Abuse Specialist Team (iFAST) was first assembled in 2013 as a result of the upward trend in the financial exploitation of older adults. This multi-disciplinary collaboration bridges gaps between social service and community-based organizations, county and state law enforcement agencies, financial institutions, legal services and state agencies. Through the unique professional knowledge of each discipline, iFAST aims to detect, reduce, and respond to incidents of financial exploitation among vulnerable adults using a collaborative effort.

Current efforts of iFAST include:

- Building partnerships with financial institutions and other professionals that can share strategic expertise to improve investigations and the resolution of financial exploitation.
- Hosting events for professionals of various disciplines (law enforcement, banking, APS, etc.) to learn from each other and from other experts and identify ways they can better collaborate to address financial exploitation.
- Provide education on how to prevent and address scams and fraud targeting vulnerable adults through “Money Smart for Older Adults” presentations
- Inviting a financial expert to serve on the Fatality Review Team (FRT).

Conducting education sessions that train older adults in recognizing and preventing financial exploitation

### **Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP)/Empowering Seniors to Prevent Healthcare Fraud:**

The SMP Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Program is a national program that empowers Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries to prevent, detect, and report health care fraud. AgeOptions leads the Illinois SMP Program with funding from the Administration for Community Living. AgeOptions is able to reach all areas of Illinois with the SMP message by partnering with the 13 Illinois Area Agencies on Aging, White Crane Wellness Center, Catholic Charities and the Coalition of Limited English-Speaking Elderly.

Trained volunteers and staff give community presentations (in-person or virtually), outreach events/health fairs, and provide one-on-one counseling to Medicare and Medicaid recipients and caregivers on the SMP Message:

- **Protect:** Protect yourself from Medicare errors, fraud, or abuse by never giving your Medicare number to strangers who call or visit your home.

- Detect: Learn how to detect potential errors, fraud, or abuse by reading your Medicare Summary Notice or explanation of benefits from your insurance company.
- Report: If you suspect that you have been a target of errors, fraud, or abuse, contact the SMP Hotline at (800)699-9043 and we will return your call within 24 hours.
- If you would like a presentation on Medicare Fraud you can contact us at (800)699-1463 to schedule.

### **AgeOptions Nutrition Innovation – Closed Loop Referral**

In the fall of 2018, AgeOptions was one of five agencies nationwide to receive a two-year grant supporting innovations in nutrition programs and services from the U.S. Administration for Community Living. This grant was extended for one more year and will end in September 2021, while the intent of AgeOptions is to continue utilizing closed-loop platforms.

Rush University Health Systems and Oak Street Health have been working with AgeOptions on this project to increase the likelihood that patients who are experiencing food insecurity and/or are at nutrition risk will receive and act upon referrals to community-based resources. The grant also explores the value of a closed-loop referral system using NowPow and Aunt Bertha which was added-in 2020. The healthcare entities making the referral to address food insecurity as a Social Determinant of Health are informed of the outcome of the older adult's participation with the food interventions, and it is anticipated that they will realize the benefit of the food interventions and the information provided to them by closing the referral loop to the older adult patient under their care.

The Nutrition Innovations grant is an integral strategy of AgeOptions' participation in the Statewide Initiative to address social isolation. Older adults who are at-risk of being food secure are often isolated. Older adult patients of Rush University Oak Park Hospital and its outpatient clinics, inpatient, Emergency Department and participants in the annual Medicare Health Risk Assessment, and older adult patients of Oak Street Health clinics who appear to be at-risk of food insecurity are referred to AgeOptions for further screening and linkage to community-based nutritional supports. In addition, these same older adults who are referred will be screened and assisted in applying for other government programs such as SNAP and Medicaid, plus the array of programs and services offered by AgeOptions and specifically, Telephone Topics provided under the auspices of Mather LifeWays for health education.

### **AgeOptions Nutrition Innovation – Title III C 1.5**

In the fall of 2020, AgeOptions was awarded a second U.S. Administration for Community Living Nutrition Innovations grant. This grant by design is to run for three years.

For a number of years, AgeOptions noted a gap between Title III C 1 – Congregate and Title III C 2 – Home Delivered Meals. The gap between these two programs is one

where there are older adults who are challenged in grocery and food pantry shopping, but have the ability and interest in cooking. The older adult may also have a home care worker under the state's Community Care Program who could do the cooking in the older adult's plan of care, but because of the intensity of needs of other services may not have the time to shop. This gap, AgeOptions coined as Title III 1.5 falling between the other two nutrition programs.

AgeOptions proposed a program that the older adult provided with fresh fruits and vegetables, proteins and starches can create with planned menus and recipes meals to cover 21 meals per week. In addition, to recognize the diversity of our suburban communities, the meal boxes are to be targeted to an array of ethnic communities. Participants in Title III C 1.5 will also be screened for risk of social isolation and linked with resources.

AgeOptions is currently in the midst of Year 1 which is development. Year 2 is implementation of the program and in Year 3, we anticipate that the operations will be assumed by our engaged partners. Through all phases of this initiative is ongoing evaluation to ensure we are meeting the federal nutrition guidelines for daily intake of food, as well as, realizing a high level of satisfaction since one of the project's goals is to reduce food waste. It is also anticipated that this demonstration will show a cost-effective way of providing meals that are significantly less expensive than food that is prepared. It is hoped that an outcome of our demonstration will be consideration to add this Title III 1.5 category as a service and funding option under the next reauthorization of the federal Older Americans Act.

### **Illinois Pathways to Health**

AgeOptions developed and owns that statewide network hub for evidence-based health promotion programming. We offer statewide programmatic technical assistance, unified marketing materials including a website, reporting tools and one contract access to this network to health care providers and insurers and others that are interested in offering these programs to their patients/members.

AgeOptions is currently the recipient of two ACL grants to advance our statewide efforts: ACL Chronic Disease Self-Management Education (CDSME) and ACL Falls Prevention. The ACL CDSME grant was awarded to AgeOptions on 4/28/2021 as a 3-year grant.

*Take Charge of Your Health Programs:* Take Charge of Your Health is an interactive workshop series designed for individuals with ongoing health conditions. This evidence-based program, originally developed at Stanford University, provides information and tools to help individuals manage their health and lead active lifestyles. Workshops meet weekly for 2 ½ hours for six weeks and are led by two trained facilitators. The workshop group consists of no less than ten and no more than twenty participants. Workshop facilitators are often volunteers who have either personal or professional experience with ongoing health conditions. AgeOptions offers four versions of the program at locations throughout suburban Cook County:

- Take Charge of Your Health: Provides information and self-management skills for older adults with ongoing health conditions and their caregivers.

- Tomando Control de su Salud: A culturally adapted Spanish language version of Take Charge of Your Health for older adults with ongoing health conditions and their caregivers.
- Take Charge of Your Diabetes: Provides information and self-management skills specifically for older adults who have diabetes, are diagnosed as pre-diabetic and their caregivers.
  - Take Charge of Your Diabetes- Plus: The same program as above, but with a clinical wrap-around program that includes one-on-one assessments and counseling provided by a registered dietitian. Participants must be diabetic and are required to have a physician referral.
- Tomando Control de su Diabetes: A Spanish language version of Take Charge of Your Diabetes for older adults who have diabetes, are diagnosed as pre-diabetic and their caregivers.
- Take Charge of Your Pain: This class is designed for people who have a diagnosis of chronic pain, offering strategies for dealing with their symptoms.
- Cancer: Thriving and Surviving: Provides information and self-management skills for older adults with cancer and their caregivers.
- Workplace CDSMP: A version of Take Charge of Your Health designed to be delivered at a workplace with one hour sessions

Under the ACL CDSME grant, AgeOptions will work with the Coordinated Care Alliance to offer the HomeMeds program so that Community Care Program participants will be screened for adverse drug interactions and can receive a pharmacist review of medications should the initial screening raise concern. Participants in HomeMeds will be referred to health promotion programming.

#### *Falls Prevention Programming*

- A Matter of Balance: a program that emphasizes practical strategies to reduce the fear of falling and increase activity levels of older adults
- Bingocize: a program that combines exercise and health information with the familiar game of Bingo
- Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls Prevention: an evidence-based Tai Chi program designed to reduce the fear of falling, improve relaxation and balance and provide socialization.

AgeOptions currently provides facilitator training for organizations interested in building internal capacity for these program.

Funding for the Take Charge of Your Health Programs come from the Administration for Community Living and Title III-D direct service funding.

**Memory Café Programs:** In 2018, AgeOptions provided stipends to several of our Older Americans Act funded agencies to pilot 21 memory cafes throughout Suburban Cook County. AgeOptions launched the Memory Café concept to address social isolation among older people and to work towards dementia friendly communities throughout suburban Cook County. The stipend opportunities were for Congregate Meal Sites, Caregiver Resource Centers, and Targeting to Culturally and Linguistically

Isolated Persons (TCLIP) Agencies to allow for a demonstration project during fiscal year 2019 with the intent that it would expand throughout our network and continue beyond fiscal year 2019.

A memory café is a social gathering designed for people living with dementia, or another form of cognitive impairment, and their care partners to feel welcomed and engaged in their own community. The cafes focus on socialization, engaging activities, education, and entertainment. They are also designed to be spaces where caregivers can connect to a caregiver specialist from one of our Caregiver Resource Centers to learn more about resources outside of the Memory Café that may be available to them.

In response to COVID-19, all cafes transition to a virtual platform. AgeOptions continued to fund 15 partners in FY21 to maintain virtual memory café programming via Zoom. New virtual programming was added to the docket of offerings, such as Ageless Grace, a brain and exercise health program in which AgeOptions' IPHA AmeriCorps member was trained to facilitate.

Four of the 15 funded memory cafes are being implemented by an AgeOptions funded TCLIP agency, and are thus bilingual cafes to meet the needs of the communities they serve. There are memory cafes held in Spanish, Arabic, Mandarin, and Gujarati.

**Expanding Older Adult Programming in Libraries:** AgeOptions provided stipends to 26 public libraries across Suburban Cook County in FY21. Libraries in low income and majority-minority communities were particularly targeted and encouraged to apply. These stipends were distributed to increase library capacity for hosting older adult programming and at least 50% of the stipend was designated for technology to help bridge the digital divide during COVID-19. In addition to expanding on technology offerings, libraries created tech-training and educational materials for older adult patrons. Libraries focused on adapting and expanding programming that would reduce social isolation among their older adult patrons, while also connecting them to available resources within their communities, such as their local Aging and Disability Resource Center. Participating libraries were also encouraged to host AgeOptions' presentations and evidence-based programming, such as Medicare fraud prevention, benefits access, Take Charge of Your Health, and Stress Busters for Caregivers.

**Uniper Care:** Uniper is a virtual senior center delivered to older adults in a low-tech fashion, including their UniTV devices that transforms any television into a virtual portal. In 2020, AgeOptions began a Uniper pilot targeting low-income, socially isolated older adults and caregivers and providing Uniper subscriptions to them at no-cost. Uniper is designed to be socially engaging and connect users with programs and activities that engage them. For more information on Uniper, watch this video:

<https://vimeo.com/515443990>

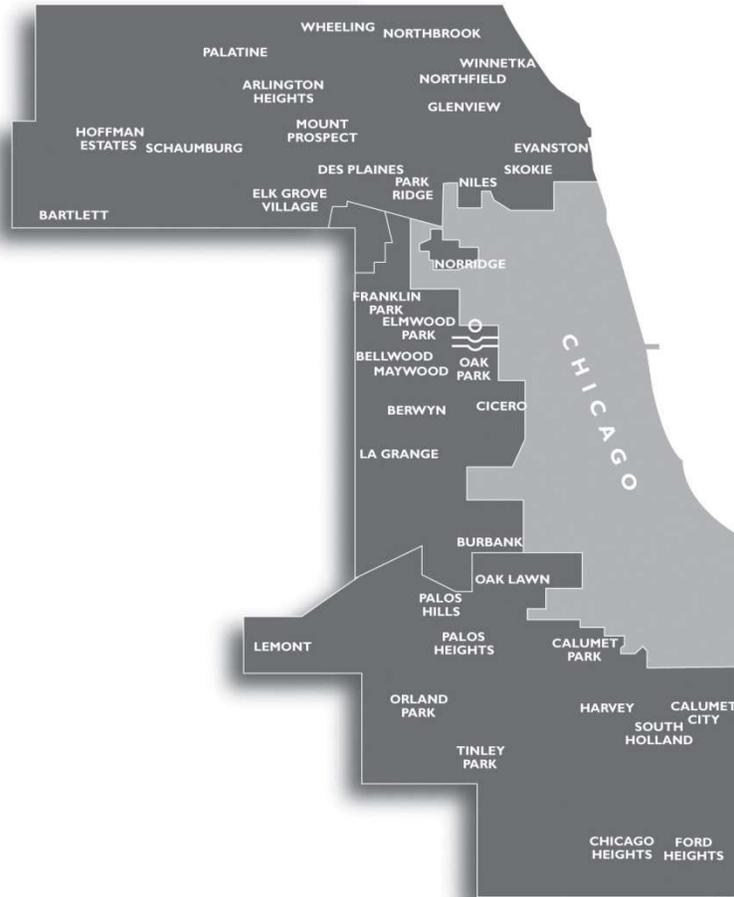
**Volunteerism:** AgeOptions continues to support a welcoming, flexible and creative volunteer program that effectively engages and cultivates the skills of volunteer to enhance aging services in suburban Cook County. AgeOptions uses volunteers for the SMP program, Benefits Enrollment Center, Take Charge of Your Health, fundraising, iFast, and AgeOptions Board and Advisory Council. For more information about

volunteer opportunities, please call at (708)383-0258, email us at [volunteer@ageoptions.org](mailto:volunteer@ageoptions.org), or go to the AgeOptions website at <https://www.ageoptions.org/about-ageoptions/careers/>.

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# AgeOptions Service Area

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## Townships Served by AgeOptions

North Region	West Region	South Region
Barrington	Berwyn	Bloom
Elk Grove	Cicero	Bremen
Evanston	Leyden	Calumet
Hanover	Lyons	Lemont
Maine	Norwood Park	Orland
New Trier	Oak Park	Palos
Niles	Proviso	Rich
Northfield	River Forest	Stickney
Palatine	Riverside	Thornton
Schaumburg		Worth
Wheeling		

# Contact an Agency in Your Area

Services and programs are available to people with disabilities aged 18 and over and adults aged 60 and over.

North Suburbs		West Suburbs		South Suburbs	
<b>Barrington, Hanover and Wheeling Townships</b> Catholic Charities-Northwest (847)253-5500		<b>Lyons, Riverside and Norwood Townships</b> <i>(including Brookfield and LaGrange Park)</i> Aging Care Connections (708)354-1323		<b>Bloom, Bremen, Calumet, Rich and Thornton Townships</b> South Suburban Senior Services of Catholic Charities (708)596-2222	
<b>Schaumburg and Elk Grove Townships</b> Kenneth Young Center (847)524-8800		<b>Berwyn, Cicero and Proviso Townships</b> <i>(excluding Brookfield and LaGrange Park)</i> Solutions for Care (708)447-2448		<b>Lemont, Orland, Palos and Worth Townships</b> Pathlights (708)361-0219	
<b>Evanston and Niles Townships</b> North Shore Senior Center- Niles (847)864-3721		<b>Oak Park and River Forest Townships</b> Oak Park Township Senior Services (708)383-8060		<b>Stickney Township</b> Stickney Township Office on Aging (708)636-8850	
<b>Maine, New Trier and Northfield Townships</b> North Shore Senior Center-Northfield (847)784-6000		<b>Leyden Township</b> Leyden Family Services Senior Citizen Program (847)451-0330			
<b>Palatine Township</b> Palatine Township Senior Citizens Council (847)991-1112		<b>Type in your address in referral portal to find out your agency and resources near you!: <a href="https://services.ageoptions.org/">https://services.ageoptions.org/</a></b>			
Suburban Cook Cultural Services and Support					
<b>Hispanic/Latino Communities</b> Alivio Medical Center (773)254-1400		<b>Arab American Communities</b> Arab American Family Services (708)599-2237		<b>Korean Communities</b> Hanul Family Alliance (847)439-5195	
				<b>Indo-Asian Communities</b> Metropolitan Asian Family Services (847)824-9414	
				<b>Chinese Communities</b> Xilin Senior Services (847)607-6555	
Countywide Information and Assistance					
<b>Suburban Cook County</b> AgeOptions (708)383-0258		<b>City of Chicago</b> Chicago Department of Family and Support Services - Senior Services (312)744-4016		<b>Collar Counties Outside of Cook County</b> AgeGuide (Collar counties) (800)528-2000	



**For more information, please contact:**

1048 Lake Street, Suite 300  
Oak Park, IL 60301-1102

[www.ageoptions.org](http://www.ageoptions.org)

(708)383-0258

(800)699-9043

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>National Alliance on Caregiving and AARP (2015). Caregiving in the U.S. Retrieved from: <http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/2015/caregiving-in-the-united-states-2015-report-revised.pdf>. This report estimates that 14.3% of the adult population aged 18 and older serves as an unpaid caregiver to someone over the age of 50. According to the 2015-2019 American Community Survey (Table: DP05), there are 1,928,696 adults in suburban Cook County, if 14.3% are a caregiver then approximately 275,830 caregivers in suburban Cook County.